لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

إن الدين عند الله الإسلام

THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

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DECEMBER, 1982—FATH, 1361

EDITOR

M. G. AHMAD

THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD, was born in 1835 in Qadian, a village in India. In the eighties of the 19th century, he was called to the office of World Reformer to combat the false Religious Philosopies and to explode the Christian theory of redemption based on the fiction of Christ's death on the Cross and to tell the Christians and Muslims to call off their hope for a second visit from Christ as he had been gathered to his fore-fathers and barred like all mortals from coming back to the world.

He initiated the Ahmadiyya Movement, to revive faith in God, challenging rival churches to a spiritual contest to seek Divine sanction for the Religion He favoured, through prayer and appeal to Him for guidance and arbitration in the matter by means of His signs, to expound and disseminate spiritual beauties and moral excellence of the teachings of the Holy Quran, to wean men from war-like tendenies and to educate world opinion in favour of renunciation of war as a means of settling disputes, to infuse hope, faith and courage in the drooping hearts of all the depressed races and nations of the world, to warn the exploiters, slave-drivers and pedlars in sin against the evil consequences for their evil ways, to collect under one banner all the true lovers of peace and to inculcate among them the spirit of tolerance, good-will and selfless fellow-service and a feeling of true brotherhood.

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He passed away in 1908 and was succeeded by his foremost votary and closest companion, Hazrat Hafiz Haji Hakim Maulvi Noor-ud-Din. After his death in 1914, Hazrat Haji Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, was chosen as Head of the Movement. During his 52 years long leadership, he organized a world-girdling chain of mosques and missions. On his death on November 8, 1965 the electoral college named with one accord, Sahibzada Mirza Nasir Ahmad as Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement. During his seventeen years of Khilafat he established many new missions, built new mosques and also established the Majlis Nusrat Jahan, which established score of new schools and hospitals in West Africa. As a result of severe heart attack he passed away on June 9, 1982. On June 10, 1982 the Electoral College named Sahibzada Mirza Tahir Ahmad as Head of Movement.

For further information about the Movement, its activities, aims, objectives and literature, enquires may be addressed to the nearest Ahmadiyya Mission or direct to :

(For inland correspondents)
NAZIR ISLAH-O-IRSHAD
Sadar Aniuman Ahmadiyya
Pakistan Rabwah.

(For foreign correspondents)
SECRETARY
Ahmadiyya Muslim Foreign Missions,
Tahrik-i-Jadid, Rabwah, Pakistan.

The Review of Religions

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

This is an organ of the Ahmadiyya Movement. It deals with religious, ethical, social and economic questions. It also provides Book Reviews.

It is open to all for discussing problems vital to the religious and spiritual welfare of man, but it does not give any assuraunce to publish all articles received by the Editor, nor does it accept responsibility for views expressed by contributors.

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THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

RABWAH, PAKISTAN

Vol. LXXVII **December 1982—Fath 1361 H.S.** **No. 12**

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A Verse from the Holy Quran

When My servants enquire from thee concerning Me, O Prophet, tell them I am close. I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So should they respond to Me and have firm faith in Me, that they may be rightly guided.

When those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger want to know what are the favours of Allah, the Exalted, which are specially for us and are not extended to others, tell them I am close to them. In other words the difference between them and you is that you are chosen by Me and are near Me, and the others are discarded and are far away. When any of you pray to Me I respond to them, that is to say, I speak to them and accept their prayers. So should they carry out My commandments and have firm faith in Me that they may attain to good.

(Jang Muqaddas, p. 54, Paper of May 26, 1893)

He listens to the call of everyone who calls on Him and responds to it; that is to say 'He accepts prayers.'

(Report of the Conference of Great Religions, p. 125)

If My servants should ask thee about Me: Where is He? Tell them: He is close to you. I hear the prayer of the supplicant. They should seek Me through prayer and should believe in Me firmly that they may prosper.

(Report of the Conference of Great Religions, p. 139)

When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am close; that is to say, for My friends I am near, for My enemies I am far. (Sat Bachan, p. 92)

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When My servants enquire from thee: What proof is there of the Existence of God? the reply is that I am very near; meaning that not much argument is needed, My Existence can be easily perceived and the proof of it is not far to seek. When a supplicant calls on Me, I hear his call and respond to it. I convey to him the good news through revelation, which is not only proof of My Existence, but also establishes that I am All-Powerful. But they should be righteous and fear Me that I may hear their call and they should have faith in Me, even before their spiritual insight is perfected and should confess that God exists and is All-Powerful. He alone is given insight who believes. (Ayyamus Sulh, p. 31)

When My servants enquire concerning Me: Where is He? the answer is that I am so close that none else is so close. Whoso calls on Me believing in Me, I respond to his call. Everything is under My control, and My Knowledge comprehends all. I am the support of the heavens and the earth; I transport you through land and over the water.

(Naseem-i-Da'awat, pp 84-85)

Should My servants enquire concerning My Existence, how may it be established and how may it be apprehended that God is; the answer is that I am very near. When a supplicant calls on

Me, I hear his call and respond to him and speak to him. So they should take such order with themselves that I should speak to them, and should have firm faith in Me so that they may find their way to Me. (Lecture at Lahore, p. 13)

They should carry out My commandments and should believe in Me so that they should attain good.

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(Paigham Sulh, p. 47)

The affirmation in the Holy Quran: I respond to the call of the supplicant; clearly establishes that prayer is heard.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. VI, No. 26, 10 October 1902, p. 12)

I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls on Me, means: I accept the repentance of the penitent. This divine promise justifies the resolve that a sincere penitent makes. Had there not been this assurance from God, repentance would have been a difficult matter. When a penitent makes a sincere resolve to amend, Allah also fulfills all assurances He has given to penitents. From the moment a penitent affirms that he would eschew all sin and would uphold his faith above all worldly concerns a light begins to illumine his heart. (Al-Badar, Vol. II, No. 14, 24 April 1903, p. 107)

If there is a question: How may knowledge of God be obtained? the answer is that the God of Islam is very close. When anyone calls on Him with a sincere heart, He responds. Other Gods are so far that there is no sign of them. The highest purpose of a worshipper is to attain nearness to Him, and this is the means of achieving certainty concerning Him. I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls on Me, means that He replies, that He is not dumb. All other arguments are inferior to this. Speech is a substitute for sight. (Al-Badar, Vol. II, No. 29, 1 August 1904, p. 3)

When a servant of Mine enquires concerning Me, I am very close. I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls on Me. Some people are in doubt concerning His Existence. He says: The proof of My Existence is that you should call on Me and ask

of Me, I shall call you and respond to you and remember you. Somesay : we call on Him, but He does not respond. As ume that you stand at a certain spot and call a person who is far from you and he answers back, but you are hard of hearing and you do not hear him. As the intervening obstructions and distance are reduced you will begin to hear him. Ever since the beginning there has been evidence that He speaks to His chosen servants. Had that not been so belief in His Existence would gradually have died out. The strongest proof of the Existence of God is that we should hear His voice. Speech is substitute for sight. So long as there is an obstruction between God and His supplicant, His voice will not be heard ; when the intervening obstruction is removed His voice will be heard. (Al-Hakam, Vol. VIII, Nos. 38 and 39, 10 and 17 November 1904 pp. 6—7)

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Prayer is the strongest proof of the Existence of God. He has said When My servants ask thee concerning Me : Where is He, and what is the proof of His Existence ? tell them I am very close. The proof is that when a supplicant calls on Me, I respond to him. This response is manifested through a true dream, or vision, or verbal revelation. Besides God manifests His power in consequence of prayer, and it is established that He is All-Powerful and can remove all difficulties. Prayer is great wealth and great power. The Holy Quran repeatedly invites to Prayer and recites instances of deliverance through prayer. The whole basis of the lives of the Prophets and the true and real means of their success is prayer. So I admonish you to be diligent in prayer for the purpose of fostering your capacity for faith and righteous conduct. Prayer will bring about a transformation assuring a good end by Allah's grace.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. IX, No. 2, 17 January 1905, p. 3)

Spiritual insight is won through divine grace and is maintained through it. Grace polishes insight and brightens

it, removes intervening obstructions, cleanses the ego, bestows life and strength on the soul, delivers the ego from the prison of desire, washes evil inclinations clean, and rescues man from the violent cyclones of passion. Man is then transformed and develops abhorrence towards evil. Thereafter the first impulse generated in the soul by grace is prayer. Be not content with the thought: We too pray daily and our Salat is all prayer. The prayer that is generated by grace after the development of spiritual insight has an entirely different complextion and quality. It is an instrument of effacement, it is a fire that melts, it is a magnetic power for attracting divine mercy. It is a death that revives; it is a fierce storm that becomes an ark. It repairs all disorders and converts every poison into an antidote. (Lecture at Sialkot, p. 26)

Prayer comes from God and proceeds towards God. Through prayer God becomes as close to you as your own soul. The first blessing of prayer is that the supplicant experiences a purifying change, and corresponding to this change God makes a change in the manifestations of His attributes, which the world is not aware of. For His changed servant He manifests Himself in new ways. Then by virtue of this new manifestation He does for His transformed servant that which He does not do for others. This is the explanation of the miraculous. (Lecture at Sialkot, p. 27)

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There is a sort of death in prayer. One of its principal effects is that the supplicant suffers a kind of death. If a person who pretends to be very thirsty tastes a drop of water and then claims that his thirst has been quenched makes a false claim. But if he quaffs a large cupful this will prove his assertion. When a supplication is made in a mood in which the soul melts and flows out to the threshold of the Almighty, and such a supplication alone deserves the name of prayer, God, the Exalted, responds to it, either through the event or by His word. In verbal revelation the recipient feels as if God Himself is causing the words to issue from

his mouth, and there is such power and strength in them as if a steel nail was being driven in, and yet there is such delicacy and Smoothness as if they were God's own words.

(Al-Badar, Vol. I, No. 11, 9 January 1903 pp. 91-96)

When an infant cries out in hunger, the mother's breasts experience an upsurge of milk though the infant has not the least concept of prayer. Then how is it that his cries draw milk into the mother's breasts? Everyone has experience of this. Sometimes the mother has not even the feeling that there is milk in her breasts, and yet as soon as she hears the child's cries there is an upsurge of milk, as if the cries are connected with the action of the milk-producing glands I tell you truly that if our supplications have the characters of the child's cries they bring into operation God's grace and mercy and attract them I can state it as my experience that I have felt the grace and mercy of God being drawn towards me as a response to prayer. Indeed, I can say I have seen it. Today's dark minded philosophers may not be ab'e to feel or see it. Their incapacity in this respect cannot rebut this truth, more particularly when I am ready to demonstrate acceptance of prayer. (Al-Hakam, Vol. V, No 22, 31 August 1901, p. 3)

There has been no Prophet who has not urged prayer. Prayer is the means of establishing a relationship between man and God. This is a very difficult sphere, but prayer makes it easy. Persistent supplication converts the supplicant into a different being. His spiritual impurities are washed out and he experiences new comfort and delight. He becomes ready to endure every difficulty that he may encounter without a trace of prejudice or make-believe. That which others do not and cannot bear, he is ready to bear for the sake of winning the pleasure of God, the Exalted. Then God, Who is Gracious and Compassionate and is all merey casts a look upon him and converts all his tribulations into joy and delight.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. V, No. 17, 10 May 1901, pp. 3-4)

Prayer is a perfect relationship between man and God.

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But for acceptance of prayer all would be vain.

(Al-Hakam Vol. VI, No. 45, 17 December 1902, p. 3)

Through prayer a dry stick may be converted into a leafy branch and dead may be brought to life. A person hopelessly sunk in the mire of sin could be rescued in accordance with the divine system of decrees and determination. Allah will take him by the hand and he would feel that he has become a different person. One who has been poisoned cannot cure himself. He needs another's ministrations. Allah, the Exalted, has established this Movement so that people may be purified. The prayers of an appointed one are an effective means of purification. To pray for another and to solicit the prayers of another for oneself is all under the control or God, the Most High. When the heart aches for prayer and penetrates through all barriers and obstructions that is a sign that the prayer has been heard. There is nothing beyond the reach of prayer. If the conditions for acceptance of prayer are established a vile and vicious person may through prayer become righteous, and without prayer he may not be able to adhere to his resolve of repentance. A diseased and obstructed soul cannot guide itself. God's way is that when righteous one's prayer for one so afflicted are carried to their limit a flame of light falls upon his heart and consuming all his vileness dispels darkness and lights up his interior.

(Al-Hakam Vol. VII, No. 8, 28 February 1903, pp. 5—6)

All difficulties are resolved through prayer.

(Al-Hakam, Vol VII, No 10, 17 March 1903, p. 3)

The essence of Islam is comprised in prayer. If there is no acceptance of prayer, *Salat* is vain, *Zakat* is useless, and all other works (God forbid) are without result.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. VIII, No. 13, 10 April 1902, p. 3)

Allah, the Glorious, has opened one door wide for the welfare of His creatures and that is prayer. When a person enters through this door weeping and lamenting, the Generous Lord covers him up in the cloak of purity and holiness and so overpowers him with the concept of His own Greatness

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that he altogether shuns undesirable activities and vain pursuits. (Al-Hakam, Vol. VII, No. 20, 31 May 1903, p. 14)

The nearnest way for the winning of divine grace, is prayer; and essentials of perfect prayer are that it should proceed from an agitated, burning and melting heart. Prayer that is offered in humility and agitation and issues from a breaking heart attracts the grace of Allah, the Exalted, and being accepted becomes the means of achieving the objective. But such a prayer itself does not become available without divine grace. Thus the only course is to persist. Whatever the degree of lack of enthusiasm the supplicant should not give up. Prayer is needed even for acquiring the capacity for true prayer. Many people get tired or bored and give up in despair. My advice is to go on washing the dust, in the end you will find the jewel you are seeking. A day comes when the heart also joins the tongue and the humility and agitation which are essential for prayer well up. He who gets up in the middle of the night, however reluctantly and unwillingly and implores: Lord, my heart is under Thy control, do Thou, of Thy grace, cleanse it and purify it, and thus seeks to be rid of constraint and to win through openness, will find the constraint dissolving and the heart melting. That is the hour of the acceptance of prayer. He will find the soul flowing like water at the threshold of God.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. VII, No. 31, 24 August 1903, p. 3)

Prayer resolves every difficulty. With the help of prayer the most difficult task becomes easy. People are not aware of the value of prayer. They are soon discouraged and give up in despair; while prayer demands persistence and steadfastness. If a supplicant continues in earnest God removes not only one moral deficiency but thousands of deficiencies, and makes the supplicant a perfect believer. But this needs sincerity and effort, and these also are acquired through prayer.

(Al-Hanam, Vol. VIII, No. 13, 24 April 1904, p. 4)

Man should strive to be released from the grip of worldly life, viewing it as evil, and seeking help through

prayer. When he has recourse to proper planning and seeks help through sincere prayer, Allah delivers him from a sinful life and he emerges out of it. Prayer is not to be taken for granted; it too is a sort of death. When a person accepts this death, Allah the Exalted, delivers him from the sinful life which is the cause of death, and bestows a pure life upon him.

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Many people consider prayer a mere formality. For them prayer means raising hands after the end of Salat and repeating a few phrases that may come to mind. Such a prayer is of no avail. It is like the repetition of a slogan in which the heart has no part, nor is there any reliance upon God's powers. Bear in mind that prayer is a kind of death, and as a person is restless and agitated at the approach of death, so should he be agitated in prayer for without this the purpose of prayer is not achieved. A supplicant should get up in the middle of the night and should make his supplications before Allah in extreme humility and agitation, while he is in the grip of emotion, and thus seek a release from his difficulties. It is when such supplication is continued to a stage which resembles death, that it will find acceptance.

Remember also that the first and essential supplication should be that the supplicant be washed clean of all sin and disobedience. This is the first condition of all suplication. When this prayer is accepted and the supplicant having been washed clean of all dirt and uncleanness, is accounted pure in the sight of Allah, he no longer needs to supplicate about his affairs, for his supplications concerning them are granted without utterance. The prayer that calls for great diligence and effort is that he may be delivered from sin and may be accounted righteous and truthful in the sight of Allah. It is necessary that the primary obstructions that envelop a person's heart be first removed. When these are removed, not so much effort and diligence would be needed for the removal of the other

obstructions, for by the grace of Allah numerous other defaults and weaknesses will begin to disappear of their own. When purity and holiness are generated inside, and a true relationship is established with A'lah, He becomes the patron and guardian, and before He is supplicated in respect of a need He provides for it on His own. This is a fine secret which is reveald only when a person arrives at that stage; it is difficult to comprehend it before. This needs a grand effort, as indeed does prayer itself. If a person is indifferent to prayer and keeps away from it, Allah too does not have any concern for him and draws away from him. Haste and impatience are not of any avail here. God bestows out of His grace and beneficence whatever He wills and when He wills. It is not for the supplicant to complain of delay and think ill. His duty is to continue to supplicate patiently and steadfastly. (Al-Hakam, Vol. VIII, No. 13, 24 April 1904, pp. 5–6)

Prayer approaches acceptance when it is charged with the highest degree of agitation and emotion. When it reaches that stage signs begin to be manifested of its acceptance by Allah and means to that end also come into evidence. The means are first established in heaven, then they are manifested on earth. This is not a small matter. It is a grand reality. The truth is that he who desires to witness manifestation of the Divine should take to prayer.

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(Al-Hakam, Vol. VIII No. 13, 24 April 1904, p. 6)

If prayer had been at one's own choice, man could have achieved whatever he desired. That is why I can never say such and such a matter will certainly be determined favourably to a friend or relative. Sometimes despite a great urge one is not able to pray and the heart is constrained. As most people are not aware of this they are led astray. They begin to think that fatalism is justifed. It is true that all is within God's knowledge, but this does not mean that God has not the power to do whatever He wills. If these people believe that whatever is to be has already been deter-

mined, and our effort and diligence are in vain, why do they run to a physician when they have a headache, and why do they drink water to quench their thirst? The truth is that human effort does produce some result.

Prayer has boneficent results. If one is granted the strength to pray, prayer can become the means of forgiveness of and deliverance from sins. It can become the means of winning the pleasure of God. Neglect of prayer rusts the heart and then hardens it, then estranges it from God and makes it God's enemy. The result is loss of faith.

(Al-Badar, Vol. III, No. 18-19, 8-16 May 1904, p. 3)

He who rejects prayer rejects God. Prayer is the sole means of recognizing God. (Al-Badar, Vol. III, No. 18-19, 8-16 May 1904, p. 3)

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Prayer is like a spring of sweet water. A believer sitting on its bank may drink his fill of it whenever he chooses. As a fish cannot survive without water, a believer cannot live without prayer which is his life-giving water. The proper occasion for prayer is the Salat in which a believer finds such comfort and delight with which the highest delight of a *bon vivant* which he can find in any of his pleasure-seeking pursuits bears no comparison. The principal benefit of prayer is the attainment of nearness to God. It is through prayer that man approaches God and draws Him towards himself. When a believer's prayer achieves complete sincerity and utter reliance upon God, He has mercy on him and becomes his patron. Were a person but to reflect upon his life, he would realize how bitter it would be without Divine patronage.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. VIII Nos. 19-20, 10-17 June 1904 p. 6)

The true meaning of Islam is that a person should subordinate his will to the will of God. But this cannot be attained through a person's own efforts. It is true that it is man's duty to put forth his effort. But the true means of attaining to this stage is prayer. Man is weak. Till he is granted strength and support through prayer he is not able to traverse this hard and difficult stage. Allah pronounces on his

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weakness : Man has been created weak (4 : 29). In view of his weakness it is vain of him to claim to achieve such a high and exalted station through his own unaided effort. There is great need of prayer for the achievement of this purpose. Prayer is a powerful instrument for over-coming great difficulties. With its help a person can easily traverse difficult stages. Prayer is a conduit pipe for the bounty and strength which is bestowed by God. A person who is much occupied with prayer succeeds in the end in attracting this bounty, and achieves purpose with God's support.

It is not God's design that a person should depend entirely upon prayer. He should have recourse to effort and striving and at the same time seek help through prayer. To rely upon prayer and to neglect appropriate means argues ignorance of the principles of prayer and amounts to a trial of God. To rely entirely on means and to ignore prayer as irrelevant is denial of God. Be sure prayer is great wealth. A person who does not neglect prayer will be safeguarded against misfortunes of every description. He is secure in a citadel which is guarded every moment by armed soldiers. He who neglects prayer is like one who is weak and unarmed in the midst of a forest infested with wild beasts. He can realize that for him there is no way of deliverance and that in a moment he will be rent asunder by the wild beasts and even his flesh and bones will disappear. Remember, therefore, that man's happiness and security lie in prayer. Hie refuge is prayer, provided he is constant In it.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. VIII, No. 34, 24 September 1904 p. 4)

Then means of acuiring real purity of life and attaining a good end, taught by Allah, which has priority over all others, is prayer. Therefore pray as much as possible. This is a highly beneficial and well tried method. Allah, the Exalted, has promised : Call on Me, I shall repond to you (40 : 61). Prayer is something that should be a matter of pride for the Muslims. The followers of other faiths have no appreciation of the effec-

tiveness of prayer, and are, therefore, indifferent towards it. The Muslims are also in great error that they are neglecting prayer. Islam is unique in having emphasized the importance of prayer. Other faiths are altogether lacking in this.

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(Speeches p. 7)

Prayer is the pride of Islam and the Muslims lay great store by it but it needs to be remembered that prayer does not mean mere repetition of words. Prayer fills the heart with the fear of God, and in prayer the soul of the supplicant flows out like water to the threshold of the Almighty and petit ons the All-Powerful for strength to overcome its weaknesses and shortcomings and begs forgiveness for them. This condition may be described as a sort of death. When it is experienced it is an indication that the door of acceptance has been opened, and that special grace and strength and steadfastness have been granted to eschew evil and to hold fast to good. It is a very powerful instrument.

But the difficulty is that people are unacquainted with the true reality of prayer, and that is the reason why in this age many of them deny the efficacy of Prayer for they see none of its effects. Some allege also that everything is predetermined and that there is no need for prayer. But one knows that this last is a mere excuse. They say so because they have no experience of prayer and are not acquainted with its effects. For, otherwise, why do they have recourse to treatment when they fall ill? When everything possesses certain properties, why should it be that in the realm of the spirit this should not be so. Prayer is a powerful instance.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. IX, No. 2, 17 January 1905, p. 2)

In the matter of prayer one should not be discouraged or disheartend nor should one give up in despair. One snould not desist till prayer has produced its full effect. Those who get tired of prayer or are discouraged are in error, for this is a sign of privation. Prayer is an excellent instrument and is not fiction. A

Problem that resists every other device is easily resolved by Allah, the Most High, through prayer. I say truly, on the basis of my experience, that prayer has tremendous effect. By means of it diseases are cured, difficulties are resolved, designs of enemies are frustrated. There is nothing that cannot be achieved through prayer. Above all it purifies man, creates living faith in God, delivers from sin and bestows steadfastness in doing good. Most fortunate is the person who believes in prayer for he witnesses the wonderful works of God, and believes through his observation that God is Mighty, Noble.

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God has taught prayer in the Quran in the very outset, which shows that it is something grand and essential and that man amounts to nothing without it. Prayer is essential for the manifestation of God's mercy and power. Therefore be diligent in prayer and never get tired of it.

In short prayer is an effective means of self-reformation, and of finding strength for doing good so that one may end up well. Its results and benefits are in proportion to the faith and trust that the supplicant places in Allah, and the resolution with which he treads along the path of prayer. All difficulties are resolved through prayer, and the supplicant arrives at the high pinnacle of righteo sness. It is the truth that no one can become pure unless God purifes him. Carnal passions are slain only through Allah's grace and through passion for him, and this grace and passion are obtained through prayer and the needed strength is also gained through prayer. I repeat that the Muslims, and more particularly our community should not by any means underrate prayer; for it is prayer on which the Muslims should rely. The followers of other faiths are indifferent towards prayer.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. IX, No. 2, 17 January 1905, pp. 2. 3)

Prayer is a remedy through which even those can be cured whom the doctors and physicians give up as incurable.

(Al-Badr, Vol. I, No. 3, 20 April 1905, p. 2)

True prayer is that through which the relationship between God and man may be strengthed. That is the prayer that brings man nearer to God and safeguards man against vain pursuits. The principal object of prayer is to win the pleasure of God. Thereafter a supplicant may beg in respect of his worldly needs because sometimes these introdue into and obstruct spiritual progress, especially during the early stages. Salat connotes burning. Prayer should induce combustion like fire. When the supplicant feels he is approaching death through this combustion that is Salat. (Al-Badar, Vol. I, No. 8, 25 May 1905, p. 4)

Prayer is the true means of recognition of God.

(Al-Hakam Vol. IX, No. 24, 10 July 1905, p. 9)

It is difficult for me to express in words the degree of confidenee I have in the healing power of prayer. The physician proceeds a certain distance and then gives up in despair. But God opens the way further towards cure through prayer. The recognition of God and confidence in God means to continue to hope beyond the limits fixed by man. That is the point at which the recognition of God begins. When most people are in despair over a matter God brings about changes behind the scenes which clear up everything. Most people are not aware of the philosophy of prayer and do not know how much concentration and diligence is needed in prayer. To pray is to pass through a sort of death.

(Al-Hakam, Vol. IX, No. 24, 10 July 1905, p, 10)

There is a spiritual force in prayer and concentration which is beyond the comprehension of those whose horizon is limited to physical means. There is a whole system of imperceptible means which comes into play as the result of prayer. When the people of the world f nd themselves helpless in the face of the prevailing confusion and disorder, then Allah, the Exalted, bestows such faculties upon his favourites by the aid of which everything is set right. Even the span of life is extended through prayer.

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(Al-Badar, Vol. I, No. 17, 27 July 1905, p. 2.)

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The problem of the acceptance of prayer is part of the greater problem of prayer. The essence of prayer is that there is a relationship of mutual attraction between man and God. First God's attribute of Rahmaniyyat draws a man to itself: then God being attracted by the sincerity of man's effort draws closer to him. Through prayer this relationship, reaching a particular stage, develops its wonderful qualities. When man, being involved in some great difficulty, leans upon God with perfect trust, hope, love, fidelity and resolve and being fully alert rends asunder the draperies of neglect and advances rapidly in the expanse of self effacement and discovers ahead the precincts of the Divine and perceives that He has no partner, his soul prostrates itself before Him and its innate faculty of attraction pulls the bounties of the Divine towards itself. Then Allah, the Glorious inclines towards the fulfillment of the object of man's prayer and causes it to stir the ancillary elements of the means that are needed for the achievement of the object. For instance, if the prayer is for rain, the acceptance of the prayer brings into being the mean requisite for rain. If the prayer is for the affliction of famine, the counter means are brought into being by the Almighty. Those blessed with the faculty of seeing vision and whose spiritual perception has been perfected are convinced through repeated experience that the prayer of one who has attained perfection develops the power of creation by the command of Allah. That is to say, by divine command it exercises control over heavenly and earthly bodies and diverts the elements and the minds of men in the desired direction. There are numerous instances of this in the divine scriptures. The source of the numerous miracles of the Prophets and of all the wonders that the saints have exhibited is the acceptance of prayer. The power of the Almighty manifests itself in consequence of prayer. The great wonder that came to pass in the desert region of Arabia, whereby hundreds of thousands of the dead were brought to life within a few days, and those who had been astray through generations be-

came attached to God, and the blind gained the faculty of sight, and the dumb began to speak of divine mysteries, and the world experienced a revolution the like of which had not been witnessed or heard of before know you what it was? They were the supplications made during dark nights by one completely lost in God which created a turmoil in the world and wrought such wonders as were considered impossibilities in relation to that helpless unlettered one. Shower Thy blessings on him, O Lord and prosper him and his people to the number of the sorrows and griefs and agonies that he bore and suffered for his people and pour forth upon him the lights of Thy mercy unto eternity.

I know from my own experience that prayer is more effective than fire and water. Indeed nothing in nature is so effective as prayer.

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If it is said some prayers appear to have no effect at all, the same is the case with remidies and medicines. Have they abolished death? Do they never prove ineffective? Yet can one deny their effectiveness? It is true that everything is subject to divine decree but divine decree does not make knowledge redundant. If a patient is destined for good, the means of proper treatment become available and the body becomes ready to derive benefit from them, in which case the remedy proves effective. The same is the case with prayer. For prayer also all the means and conditions of acceptance become available in a case in which the divine purpose is that prayer should be accepted. God, the Most High, has bound the physical and spiritual systems together in the same pattern of causes and effects. (Barakat-ud-Du'a, pp. 6—8)

In the case of prayer humble petitioning is not enough. Righteousness, purity, truthfulness and perfect faith, love and concentration are all requisites of prayer. Also that the particular object and purpose of the prayer should not be in conflict with the divine purpose regarding the life here and hereafter of the supplicant or the person on whose behalf

supplication is made. For it often happens that though the other conditons for the acceptance of prayer are present, the object for which the supplication is made is not, in God's knowledge, in accordance with the true interest or welfare of the supplicant and its acceptance would not lead him to God. For instance, if a beloved child cries piteously for a brand of fire or for the young of a serpent, or persistently desires to be fed a tempting looking poison, its mother would never yield to its solicitations. Assuming she lets it swallow the poison and the child does not die of it but is permanently disabled in consequence, it would, on arriving at years of discretion, bitterly condemn its mother's folly. There are several other conditions in the absence of which a prayer would not be accounted a true prayer. For instance, so long as a prayer is not filled with spiritual content, and the person who prays and the person for whom prayer is offered do not possess the requisite capacity, it is idle to hope for acceptance. So long as God does not will the acceptance of prayer all these conditions not do coincide, and full concentration is not achieved. (Barakat-ud-Du'a, pp.10-11)

Denial of acceptance of prayer would be contrary to experience and reason. But acceptance of prayer demands that spiritual state in which a person, discarding the cloak of desire and inclination towards any beside God, becomes all-spirit and arrives at the threshold of God. Such a person becomes a manifestation of wonders. The waves of his love effect a junction with the waves of God's love in the manner in which the clear waters of two neighbouring spring unite in one upheavel and begin to flow together. Such a one becomes a mirror in which a reflection of God is beheld. His wondrous works point to God Who is beyond of beyond. His prayers are accepted so frequently that through them he makes manifest God Who is hidden.

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(Taryaqul Qulub, pp. 151—2)

(Continued on page 30)

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The life of Mr. Bashir Ahmad Orehard, the first indigenous European Ahmadivya missionary, is worth telli:g again and again. A former British sold er, now a saint, he recalls with an extreme modesty of words ho· he abandoned an errant life and found bliss by devoting his life to the cause of Islam Mr. Orchard is our missionary in Scotland and over the years his articles have featured in most English magazines of the Ahmadiyya Movement. He is also the author of 'Life Supreme'.

LIFE SKETCH

BY

BASHIR AHMAD ORCHARD

Torquay is a delightful holiday resort on the south coast of Devon ; and it was there that I first saw the light of day on 26th April, 1920. My father was a doctor and my mother had been a nurse prior to her marriage. Class distinction existed more than it does today. My parents belonged to the upper middle class. My paternal grand-father had also been a doctor while my mother's father was an admiral. The only grandparent I knew was my maternal grandmother and she died while I was still a young boy.

I had two elder brothers but no sister. The eldest who was three years older than me met an untimately death during the Second World War when the battleship on which he served was sunk in the Mediterranean by enemy action. My other brother, who was inclined towards religion from a young age (and is now a Roman Catholic pr est), was at middle age a Protestant priest in the Church of England but subsequently had to quit his vocation. He took up teaching as a profession in a school He again had the urge to become a priest and eventually went to Rome to study and train for priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. My mother also become a Roman Catholic soon after my brother's conversion. She was a very religious lady all her life and regularly attended church. My father, however, was lit le interested in religion. One of my maternal aunts had been a missionary in China for forty years and had much to do in helping my brother first become a priest in the Church of England.

When I was three years old my father bought a house

situated on a hill overlooking Torbay. It was on the fringe of the countryside at a point called Barton Cross I used to love to roam the fields and woods and also to find my way to the many beaches which were not so very far away. I enjoyed gathering wild fruits and nuts. When in season I used to get up in the early hours of the morning and search the fields for mushrooms before other people appeared on the scene for the same purpose. Those days remain with me as living memories.

My brothers and I went to Winchester Lodge Preparatory School. The headmaster was a keen cricketer who played for Wiltshire. I was in both the cricket and football teams. One by one we left the school as we grew older and moved on to Monkton Combe which is the name of a well-known public school on the outskirts of Bath. I never enjoyed school nor was I a bright pupil. I left school at sixteen without any kind of educational certificate. Once I expressed my desire to become a doctor and I thought my father would be pleased that I wanted to follow in his footsteps. He promptly rebuffed me and told me I could never become a doctor because I lacked the aptitude for diligent study.

I left school at the end of the summer term in 1936. During that last term my mother had been granted legal separation from my father and had taken up temporary residence in Bath. Later she settled in Bristol. I was at a loose end and for nothing better to do I joined the army although I was far below eighteen which was the required minimum age. My regiment was the Somerest Light Infantry and my pay was two shillings (ten pence) a day. Life was tough and I did not find congenial companionship as I had been brought up in a more cultured society. I had signed up for seven years but at the end of my second year I wrote to my father requesting him to purchase my discharge which was the only way of terminating my service. He promptly sent me a cheque for thirty five pounds and within a few days I was home with my mother.

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It appears that I still had some attachment for army

life. I soon joined a Territorial Unit of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Territorials were parttime soldiers who normally did not have to train for more than one evening a week.

War clouds were loomjng on the horizon and on 3rd September, 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. My unit was immediately mobilised and once again I was a full-time soldier. We were sent to France and later moved up into Belgium. The German offensive pushed us back to the beaches of Dunkirk from where the battered remanants of the British Expeditionary Force were evacuated back across the English Channel to their homeland. I remember boarding a boat crowded to capacity with dishevelled and weary troops. Almost immediately I fell asleep and when I awoke the boat was entering Dover harbour. Relief organisations were awaiting to distribute tea and refreshments after which we were dispatched by train to a destination in Wales where, as heroes and not as prisoners, we were billetted in the cells of a local prison.

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In 1941 I applied for a commission in the Indian Army. I had to present myself before several interviewing boards and finally I was accepted as an officer cadet and sailed for India in 1942 with a contingent of other cadets. The ship was one in a large convoy which took two months to reach Bombay. Our final destination was Bangalore where we underwent a six months' course of training before being posted to our regiments as second lieutenants. I joined the 17th Dogra Regiment which was stationed at Jullunder. Later I was transferred to the Indian Army Ordnance Corps. I spent considerable time on active service in Assam and Burma. Perhaps one of my most memorable experiences was the siege of Kohima in the Manipur hills close to the Assam-Burma border. I was one of a motley force congregated on a wooded hill and completely surrounded by the invading Japanese. We were subjected to bombardment and attack for two weeks until reinforcements eventually broke through and relieved us. Supplies were dropped to us by parachute. On one occasion,

in particular, I was very fortunate not to lose my life. We were in trenches. I was called away from my position for a few minutes by a senior officer. During that brief period a shell landed in the trench on the spot which I had just vacated. Two sepoys who had been near to me were killed.

The foiementioned event took place in 1944 in which year deeper spiritual inclinations seemed to awaken within me. I was never much influenced by Christianity. I had become quite enchanted with Hindu literature and a close friend of mine was a Brahmin. As yet I had not been attracted in any way towards Islam a'though I did enjoy reading about the lives of the Moghul emperors in *Glimpses of World History* by Pandit Nehru,

Right up to that time my enjoyments in life were more or less the same as most young men. At sixteen I had become a regular drinker and smoker. Gambling was in my blood. When I was eighteen I had a temporary craze for dancing and of course, I enjoyed going to the cinema and theatre. Although smoking is not specifically forbidden in Islam and may be considered a lesser vice, it was the hardest of them all for me to overcome. Nevertheless the physical and spiritual benefits gained from discarding that obnoxious habit have been immense.

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Enlightenment

My unit was camped near Imphal wnich was a frontier outpost close to the Burma border. An Ahmadi havildar clerk (sergeant) who was also serving in my unit concluded for reasons best known to himself that I might be a person to whom he could introduce the message of Islam. His name was Aodul Rahman Dehlvi. There were also a number of other Britishers attached to the same unit but as far as I know he never approached any of them. Naturally he had to exercise diplomacy in view of the fact that I was a commissioned officer with whom it would not be normal to

discuss or propagate freely his religion. He arranged for a copy of the *Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be sent to me from Qadian.

My spiritual senses were exceedingly dull in those days and for this reason I found much of its contents hard to comprehend. Nevertheless parts of it inspired me and uplifted my sprrits. Later on I deliberately left it on the reading table in the officers' mess but I do not think anybody paid much attention to it. That was more than thirty-five years ago during which time I have read it thirty to forty times and, like the hopeful batsman, I may score my fifty sooner or later.

Two weeks leave were due to me and I was undecided where to go. Havildar Abdul Rahman Dehlvi urged me to go and stay with one of his friends in Qadian which was quite an unknown place to me and involved a long journey of approximately thousand miles. A couple of days later I told him that I had decided not to go. My pronouncement brought such a look of disappointment on his face that merely out of sympathy for him I immediately reversed my decision and promised to go for a few days.

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Imphal lay about eighty miles from the nearest railway link at a jungle base called Manipur. The two places were connected by long winding road that snaked up and down and round about a succession of jungle clad hills. This was the first stage of my journey. It took me at least a weak to reach Qadian which I then came to know was a small isolated town. Nobody was on the station to receive me as no one had been intimated the time of my arrival. I hired a tonga (horse vehicle) and asked the driver to take me to the home of Mufti Muhammad Sadiq which was the name of the person with whom I was supposed to stay. I was jogged along a bumpy road and then through some narrow streets until the driver stopped by a door in a wall inside of which some steps led up to another door on the level of a roof courtyard. I knocked on the upper door. A chain jangled inside and the

door was opened by a white bearded elderly gentleman stripped bare to the waist no doubt on account of the hot weather. He was Mufti Sadiq. Both of us were surprised to see one another. I introduced myself and forthwith Mufti Sadiq instructed the tonga driver to take me to the guest house where I was accommodated in a sparsely furnished white-washed room. Shortly afterwards Mufti Sadiq came around to meet me. This time he was dressed in flowing robes and wore a magnificent headdress. Later I came to know that he was a companion of the Promised Messiah—Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—and also the first Ahmadi missionary to the United States of America.

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Next day Mufti Sadiq escorted me around Qadian drawing my attention to various places of interest. I remember asking him on that occasion what was the attitude of the Jama'at towards smoking. He replied that while it was not specifically forbidden it was discouraged.

The highlight of my two day visit was an audience with Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad—the Khalifa and Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement. This was a memorable event although at that time I did not fully appreciate the significance of his spiritual status. He was seated on a chair on the verandah of his house. I do not remember the details of our conversation though I do rember expressing my view that it was sufficient to follow ten commandments in order to live a good life. His answer was to the effect that they were only some general principles which needed further clarification such as the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'.

I was impressed most of all by his luminous countenance which radiated an intangible spiritual light which seemed to shine from the widows of another world. He scintillated heavenly light and, as he spoke, a charming smile annimated his face. He was an embodiment of energetic repose radiating physical, intellectual and spiritual magnetism which captivated all within his presence. I realised that I was in the company

of no ordinary person.

Generally I was much impressed by everyonee I met. This is what attracted me towards Islam more than anything else. My knowledge of Islam at that time was negligible but I reasoned that if these persons were fruits of the faith then it certanly had something to offer. I was in search of truth and later I was to realise that I had found it in Qadian.

A notable event took place in my life in the evening after my departure. I was waiting on the station at Amaritsar which is a town about thirty miles from Qadian. While waiting for my connection I joined some other officers for drinks in the refreshment room. I was suddenly overcome with a feeling of aversion. The atmosphere seemed repulsive compared with the holy atmosphere of Qadian. There and then I resolved to forsake drinking once and for all. One of the first things I did when I rejoined my unit on the Burma front was to throw away all the bottles of alcohol I had in my possession.

The army was now on the offensive pushing deeper and deeper into Burma. The Japanese were in retreat and we had reached a small town called Meiktilla. It was there that I made my decision to accept Ahmadiyyat—the True Islam. I signed the b'iat form* and posted it to Qadian. That was, no doubt, the greatest step I had ever taken in my life.

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Blessed fruits

More than thirty-five years have passed since I accepted Ahmadiyyt—the True Islam—during which time I have been beneficially nourished by the sweet fruits of the faith in multifarious ways.

Drinking and gambling

I have already mentioned that I was shackled to both

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*Form of initiation ; b'iat lit, means to sell (oneself).

these vices. Even on my historical visit to Qadian I carried a bottle of whisky and a botttle of rum in my luggage. Fortunately some higher power or my better judgement prevented me from taking drinks while I was there although at that time I did not consider drinking to be wrong in any way. I used to gamble on horses, greyhounds, dice and card games. Once when stationed at Imphal I lost a month's pay gambling on cards with other officers. These were the first two evils from which I was rescued by Islam.

Giving in the way of Allah

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Prior to my acceptance of Ahmadiyyat I used to contribute nothing in the way of God or towards charity. Islam taught me the philosophy of giving in the way of Allah. Sacrificing what one loves for the sake of Allah wins the pleasure of Allah and earns one abundant reward. I commenced by paying one-sixteenth of my income and later increased it to one-tenth. Finally in 1967 I commenced paying one-third and have been doing so ever since. Despite the fact that I enjoy only a meagre income, life is good to me in every respect. In addition to Zakat I also regurarly give Tehrik-i-Jadid and Ansar contributions plus payments towards my Jubilee Fund promise and various other appeals.

Islam teaches that generally it is better to give in secret but one may also give openly on some occasions. it is because I have been asked to state some of the gains I have acquired through the acceptance of Ahmadiyyat that I have revealed the forementioned facts to show the extent to which I am bound to the Jama'at. I have learned and experienced that money alone does not provide happiness and contentment in this world. Peace of mind lies in the hands of Allah and not in one's wealth or material resources. Thanks to Ahmadiyyat—the True Islam—through which the blessings of Allah flow, I can truly affirm that today I enjoy peace of mind to a degree that at one time I could never have dreamed possible for me to experience.

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Prayer

Ahmadiyyat introduced into my life the regular observance of daily prayers which have proved a source of great blessing and comfort to me testifying to the truth of the verse in the Holy Quran :

It is only in the remembrance of Allah that hearts can find comfort (13 : 29).

I am still a novice in the art of prayer. Prayer is more than a routine habit. I have gained much on the subject from the writings and discourses (*malfoozat*) of the Promised Messiah. They have been a source of inspiration to me.

Sometimes it is a matter of wonder to me how any Muslim who is attached to Islam with a sincere heart can intentionally fail to offer the prescribed prayers as commanded by Allah. Once when I was in Qadian shortly after my acceptance of Islam an announcement by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II appeared on a board outside Masjid-i-Mubarak stating that if anyone during a period of ten years knowingly and deliberately forsook even one prayer of the day then he could not count himself as a true Ahmadi.

Dreams

Everybody dreams. It is a normal function of the body. Investigators have ascertained that even animals dream. Since time immemorial God has revealed Himself through the medium of dreams. The Holy Quran and earlier scriptures abound with incidents of persons to whom God communicated knowledge, messages and future events through dreams. I do not recall the details of any dream before the time I accepted Ahmadiyyat. Since then, however, I have had many dreams which I have never forgotten. Throughout the years they have remained with me as fresh and clear as at the time I received them. I will briefly relate three of them which to me are of special spiritual significance.

I accepted Ahmadiyyat in 1945. Round about that time I had a dream in which I saw myself meeting Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II in Masjid Mubarak, Qadian He said to me: 'In order to live a successful life you must not let sorrows affect you.'

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He t en raised his right hand in which he held a stick and said with great emphasis: 'And there is no doubt about it.'

In 1958 I was in Qadian for a short visit. While sleeping in the guest house I saw in a dream that somebody brought me a dish of thick cream and I was told that it had been prepared for Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II but for one reason or another it was being offered to me.

I served as a missionary in the West Indies from 1952–66, I saw in a dream that Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II was maki g me drink from a cup which he was holding t› my lips with his two hands. Looking down into the cup I saw it contained milk and a little soaked bread.

Whereas I am able to appreciate the significance of these dreams I will not comment on them.

Ambition

I had no goals or ambition in life before I accepted Ahmadiyyat. I had no plans for the future. During the war I was a soldier due to compulsory service. I was more or less drifting through life like a capsized boat in the open sea; yet when I was a very young child I was once gripped by a powerful yearning which occurred one night when I was in bed. I wanted to become and do something extra-ordinary. I did not want to pass through life being just one of a crowd. I wanted to be unique in one way or another. At that time I am sure I was not more than ten years of age at the most. I do not recall ever thinking or dwelling on the matter again. It was just a flash of the moment which never re-occured but must have taken root in my subconscious mind from where later it was to emerge into reali-

ty. It would appear that this was brought about through my acceptance of Ahmadiyyat as the following events may suggest.

When the war ended in 1945 I returned to England and was immediately demobilised. I went straight to my mother in Bristol were I stayed for a couple of days. I then travelled to London In search of the London Mosque where I introduced myself to the Imam—Maulana J.D. Shams. I expressed my desire to work with the mission and also to dedicate my life completely to the service of Islam. This event has been described by Maulan Shams :

> 'After his release from the army, when he arrived in England he stayed for two days only at Bristol with his relatives and so on the third day he was at the mosque in London. During his conversation with me he expressed his willingness to live at the mosque and become a Muslim missionary. I explained to him the responsibilities of a missionary and the required qualifications for missionary work. Evetuallly I promised him to see to his case sympathetically and would write to him on this matter. He was a little bit upset from my reluctance in accepting his offer readily. After a few days he, however, dedicated his life for the service of Islam unconditionally like other waqifeen. I sent his application to Hazrat Amirul Momineen with my opinion that he might be a useful missionary. I asked him to come and stay with us and to begin the study of Islam. Hazrat Amirul Momineen graciously accepted his waqf and Mr. Orchard began to work with other missionaries.'
>
> (*Review of Religions*, June 1947)

Allah works in mysterious ways. He willed that this insignificant individual should become the first European Ahmadi Muslim missionary. This was, indeed, a singular favour which Allah bestowed on me. The following words of counsel were deliverered to me by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II :

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'At this time you are unknown, no doubt, and unheard of, but soon the time is coming when nations will feel proud of you and sing your praises. So mind, you do not take lightly what you say and what you do. Do not think that your movements are only personal, no, but they pertain to the whole British nation. The posterity will imitate your movements and follow them to the letter...If your movements and activities will be in accordance with Islam, and noble and grand, then they will be instrumental in raising the moral tone of your nation, but if they are below the mark and not in strict accordance with Islam, your nation will be the loser thereby ; try, therefore, to set a noble example for posterity otherwise God will have another man to fulfil this task. When Ahmadiyyat will have spread all over the world, and spread it must, no power on earth can impede its destined progress, then there will be reverance for you in the hearts of the people, greater than the one which they have for the greatest of the Prime Ministers.'

(*Review of Religions*, June 1947)

I close this short review of my life with gratitude to Allah for His blessings and favour and with the declaraion that all praise is due to Allah the Lord of all the the worlds.

(Courtesy : The Muslim Hearld, April, 1982)

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(*Continued from page 18*)

When you stand up in prayer you should have firm faith that God is All-Powerful. Your prayer will then be accepted and you will behold the wonders of God's power that we have witnessed. Our evidence is based on experience and not on hearsay. How shall the prayer of that one be accepted, indeed how can he have the courage to pray in the face of great difficulties, overcoming which would in His estimation amount to defiance of the laws of nature, if he does not believe that God is All-Powerful ? (Kashti Nuh, p. 19)

(To be Continued)

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